

ATLANTA NBDPS

BUCCAL KIT REMINDERS CALLING AND MAILING PROTOCOL

12/21/99

The protocol for buccal reminders is based on the protocol currently being used by Iowa NBDPS. Up to two reminder telephone calls and a reminder letter can be employed for subjects who do not return their buccal kit. Battelle is implementing the same "time intervals" between calls and mailings, as follows.

Time Intervals for Reminder Calls and Letters:

- Date Interview completed.
- Date Buccal kit sent, usually within 1 business day of interview completion. (Iowa batches kit mailings once per week for all interviews completed in the week.)
- 14 days after date kit was sent: Place buccal reminder call #1 (BC1).
- 14 days after BD1 call is "complete" (i.e., contacted): Place buccal reminder call #2 (BC2).
- 14 days after BC2 call is "complete" (i.e., contacted): Mail buccal reminder letter (BL).
- 14 days after BL was sent: Set status to Interview Only. When kits are received beyond 14 days, disposition statuses can be modified to Interview plus Buccal.
- Thank You Letter for Completing Buccal Kit: mail after buccal kit is returned.

“Completing” Contact Attempts for Buccal Calls:

For Battelle (Atlanta NBDPS), a "Complete" status for a buccal reminder call (BC1 and BD2) refers to speaking directly with the subject. Battelle will leave a brief, general message with another person or on subject's answering machine. However, we won't stop contact attempts after leaving a message. Battelle will continue calling to speak directly with subject until we reach her for each Reminder Call.

Iowa considers BC1 complete if they have talked to the subject or have left a message on an answering machine or with another person. If not able to do that, Iowa follows the same pattern as for recruitment calls in that we attempt to reach the person across all calling periods -- morning, afternoon, evening and, if necessary, weekends.

Reminder Phone Scripts and Letters:

Interviewers employ scripts for the first and second reminder calls about non-returned buccal kits. After a specified waiting period from the second reminder call, a reminder letter will be mailed to subjects who still have not returned their kits.

Leaving Messages About Buccal Kits:

Battelle will leave a brief, general message with another person or on subject's answering machine, but also will continue calling to speak directly with subject about the reminder. The general message will be sensitive to protecting confidentiality. Thus, messages will not specifically mention birth defects or a buccal or genetic test.

Message for Subject's Answering Machine: "We're calling <Subject's First/Last Name> to see if you received the kit we sent in the mail. You may call us at our toll-free number 1-877-719-2027 with any questions. We'll also try calling you again."

Message Left with Another Person: "We're calling <Subject's First/Last Name> to see if she received the kit we sent in the mail. She may call us at our toll-free number 1-877-719-2027 with any questions. We'll also try calling her again." ("When would be a good time to reach her?")

Calls and Letters to Parents Who Forget Buccal Consent Forms:

Battelle places reminder phone calls to subjects who forget to return the written buccal consent form with the kit. Iowa sends a letter to parents who forget to return their consent forms with their kit.

Thank You Letter for Buccals:

Iowa sends a thank you letter to subjects when the lab receives the completed kit. Iowa does not send thank you letters to subjects for an interview only. Iowa considers the verbal thank you at the end of the interview to be the thank you for that portion of the study, and the written thank you is primarily for the buccal kit collection.

Tracking System for Buccal Reminders:

Battelle is upgrading its tracking system for the buccal reminder calls so that we can document the status/dates of calling for Reminder Call 1 and 2, and for mailing the final letter. Battelle is making arrangements with CDC for receiving the "non-returned" buccal kits. (The contact person at CDC for transferring the kit information is Carolyn Sullivan.)

The Iowa Buccal Tracking System has the following features. The Iowa tracking program automatically shows when the buccal reminder calls, letters, and change in status are due. Iowa finds that you need close contact with the lab that receives the kits in order to eliminate unnecessary contacts with families who have returned the kits.

Main Concerns from Subjects:

The main concerns Iowa has gotten from mothers are:

- What will we be doing with these samples?
- Will this be released to my insurance company?
- Will they get results of the analysis?
- Will a cold or illness affect the samples?
- What if not everyone can be collected at the same time?

Iowa suggests having alternate explanations that callers can give rather than just what is in the materials sent to them. Mothers do read the materials and sometimes do not quite understand, so reading verbatim to them will not be much help in answering their questions.